

PHOTOS BY BILL GOVE



BRUTE 130

The ideal small machine for the part-time operator who does not want to make a large investment hasn't been invented yet, but there are some hard-working small machines out there.

The Brute 130 is one of them.

Reviewed by Bill Gove

Firewood production is seldom a full-time occupation.

Frequently it's a sideline that fits in comfortably and profitably with a number of livelihoods. The ideal firewood processor for a part-time producer is affordable, yet rugged enough to meet the demands of heavy work. Ease of operation by a single worker is often more important than speed. Combining these elements is a difficult challenge for a manufacturer in this era of rising machinery costs.

Harlan Denny of Orange, Connecticut, was looking for such a balance when he purchased a Brute model 130 five years ago. Denny operates a landscape and tree service, and he knew that firewood production was a profitable way to deal with tree removals.

The Brute 130 is PTO powered, using a Prince hydraulic pump mounted on the tractor PTO shaft. Hydraulic hoses couple the processor to the tractor.

Denny uses a Kubota 1450 tractor, probably overpowered for his processor, since it is capable of almost 2,000 RPM.

What Denny wanted was a small, easily portable processor suitable for his production of 400 to 700 cords a year. As matters turned out, portability was not so important after all. Denny's machine remains in the wood yard, perched on a concrete slab out of the mud. A tent covering shields him from the hot sun or from inclement weather.

Much of the logging done in heavily populated southern Connecticut is actually land clearing. As a result, the wood comes in all sizes with a good share of extremely knotty material. Splitting the large diameter blocks was not a big problem for the Brute 130. The splitting ram was usually able to handle the large blocks, even those with many large knots. But the operator frequently has to hand lift larger split sections back to the splitting trough.

The Brute 130 works best on wood 6 to 12 inches in diameter; it's a slow process with large wood.

While operating the machine, Harlan Denny uses a pickeroon to deftly manipulate any wood that needs adjusting, or to clear any jams at the outfeed end of the wedge. He never puts his hand on the wood; a wise safety practice for all firewood producers.

You would expect that a lower priced machine would have to eliminate some of the mechanical conveniences of a more expensive, full-size processor, and, in doing so, fail to

overcome some operating problems. The chainsaw on the Brute 130 is a good example of that tradeoff. It is oiled by gravity from a small reservoir overhead with a manual shut-off. The oil flow is difficult to control and in some cases soaks the sawdust so much that the sawdust discharge chute is constantly plugging up.

The hydraulic oil tank on the Brute 130 is placed just under the two-strand log deck, close enough so that a protruding log knot could knock off the exposed cap if the machine is being run by an unobservant operator. Harlan Denny built a guard over the cap on his tank to prevent this problem.

Denny runs his processor sporadically as other business demands permit. The operator, one of his employees, is able to average almost a cord an hour. The split wood is dumped by conveyor onto a concrete pad, where it is left to dry in loose piles. The concrete surface speeds up drying



Harlan Denny works the controls of his Brute 130, which he has placed on a cement slab.

WOOD PROCESSOR *Review*

and leaves the wood free of dirt. Wood prices are high in Connecticut, at \$110 to \$120 a cord.

From all appearances, Denny's little Brute 130 has held up well after five years of moderately hard work.

Not far from Denny's, over in Stony Creek, Connecticut, another Brute 130 is doing part-time chores for its owner at Medlyn's Farm. Jay Medlyn recently purchased this new processor, a model 130 slightly altered from the design of Denny's machine. Jay is producing 200 to 300 cords a year in between his other activities.

Medlyn has mounted the PTO hydraulic pump on an antique 1949 Farmall H tractor, left over from his family's days of dairy farm-

ing. The tractor produces 28 HP, just enough to run the processor.

Medlyn had some changes made from the standard design when he ordered the machine. For one thing, he had Brute install a two-strand live deck. But that option is giving him some trouble. The drive sprocket is located in the middle of the chain instead of the end, and a log sometimes refuses to rise over the idle sprocket at the end before dropping into the feed trough. The log would either hang up or slow down while the drive sprocket kept jumping out of the chain links. A design improvement could easily fix this problem.

The feed trough on Jay Medlyn's Brute 130 appeared to be more rugged



Jay Medlyn operates his Brute 130 in the open air.

than that on the older model 130. It is made of channel iron rather than the iron plate which tends to bend under constant pounding. The logs fed well to the saw in Jay's machine.


However, there were a few areas which were not rugged enough to suit Jay. The base of the log clamp and clamp cylinder had to

be reinforced with a gusset plate after it had bent under pressure. Jay also is installing an electric oil pump to replace the gravity feed of oil to the saw bar. The saw bar has no adjuster to tighten the chain, which bothers Jay.

Another construction change Jay requested was shifting the controls to the other side of the machine—the side opposite the log deck—a position seldom used by processor manufacturers. Jay says it is easier to handle the blocks from that side. I noticed that as the blocks dropped from the saw down into the splitting trough, none of them centered properly in front of the wedge point. They would roll over to one side, requiring the operator

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WOOD PROCESSOR *Review*



Jay Medlyn uses a 1949 Farmall H to power his processor.

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to hold the block back in place until the ram brought it up against the wedge. The fault lies in the trough design, and hands do not belong in the machine during operation.

Jay Medlyn didn't help matters by using a 4-way wedge, which resulted in many pieces that were too large and required too much time to retrieve from the mouth of the conveyor for resplitting. It was easier in his case to work from the back side of the processor, which is not the safest place. There's always the possibility of a saw chain breaking or a piece of wood jumping back from the splitter.

Jay sells his wood dry to home users and restaurants for the attractive price of

\$130 to \$150 a cord, plus another \$40 if they want it stacked. His log supply comes from loggers with land clearings or reject sawlogs.

Jay likes to tell about the most expensive cord of wood he ever delivered. Television personality Jane Pauley and her husband Garry Trudeau have a summer home on Governor's Island, one of the islands in a group off the Connecticut coast known as The Thimbles. They purchased one cord from Jay, but getting it to their home turned out to be more of a project than he had anticipated. Trucked to the shore, the wood was then loaded on a barge for transport across the water. At the island it was tossed out onto the dock and then

BRUTE'S 130 SPEC SHEET

MODEL Brute F/P 130	CHAIN SIZE .404 inches
POWER UNIT W/HP PTO (540 or 1000 RPM) Minimum 30 HP tractor	WEDGES (STANDARD) 2, 4 and 6-way w/hydraulic lift
CYLINDER SIZE 4 x 24 x 2 inches or 5 x 24 x 2 inches	MACHINE WEIGHT 3,200 pounds
SPLITTER CYCLE TIME 6 to 10 seconds	TRANSPORT LENGTH 24 feet
HYDR. TANK CAP. 30 gallons	TRANSPORT WIDTH 6 1/2 feet
CHAINSAW BAR 27 inches	TRANSPORT HEIGHT 6 feet
	TIRES 75D14

MANUFACTURER'S COMMENTS

Brute Manufacturing Corp. has designed a new, versatile STAND-ALONE, SELF-POWERED Firewood Processor using the rugged and dependable 26 HP Wisconsin Gas Industrial Engine.

Fitted with a professional splitter of 25 tons (or faster-cycle 16 tons) both options have auto-cycle valves, 28 GPM 2-stage pump and standard 4 and 6-way wedges. Side-mounted controls give the operator greater visibility and easy control of machine and wood. Simplified hydraulics provide optimal performance.

The F/P 140 has a standard skid-way or optionally, free-standing hydraulic Live Deck.

Users are enthusiastic about an easily maneuverable machine with a performance close to that of the large Processors at a fraction of the cost.

taken by wheelbarrow to the house porch, where it was neatly stacked. Time involved: eight hours. Price for the cord: \$400.

Jay is pleased with his Brute 130. He feels that for someone who works alone, cuts less than 400 cords per year and who wants a minimum investment, the processor is satisfactory.

As a general rule, operators of firewood processors are not hesitant about pointing out design flaws to the manufacturer, and manufacturers often readily respond. Knowledge of shortcomings on existing machines gives potential buyers some items to look for, but should not necessarily rule out consideration of purchase. Processor manufacturers usually make any change requested by a potential buyer.

The Brute Manufacturing Corporation has now added the model FP140 to their line of firewood splitters and processors. Realizing that there is a limited market for PTO equipment, the company has added a 26 HP Wisconsin gas industrial engine to the basic 130

model to create the Brute FP140, a stand-alone machine.

So, has the ideal small machine been created for the part-time operator who does not want to make a large investment? Probably not yet. But there are some hard-working small machines out there. Look them over while operating, and don't hesitate to request any desired changes when you order your new machine. ■

Bill Gove is a retired forester who last worked for the Vermont Department of Parks and Forests.

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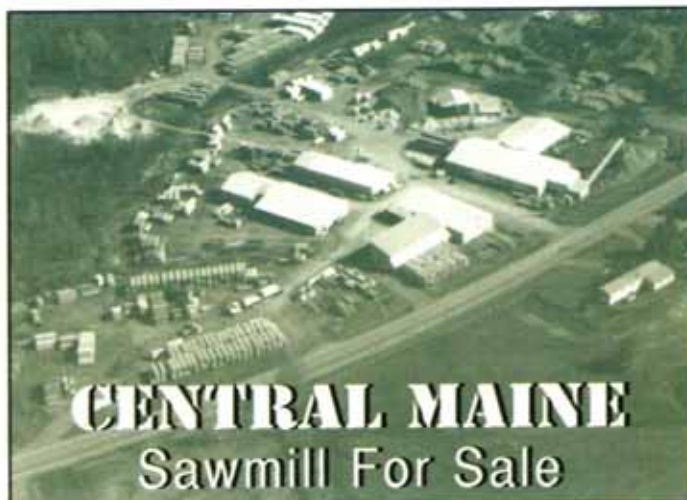
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